

## Lesson 3: Life in New Spain

### Vocabulary

**society** a group of people forming a community

**plantation** a large farm with many workers who live on the land they work

**encomienda** a grant that gave a wealthy settler control of the native people who lived on an area of land

**missionary** a person who teaches his or her religion to others who have different beliefs

**mission** a religious settlement where missionaries live and work

### The Search for Gold

The Spanish traveled north of Mexico in search of treasure. They had heard about rich kingdoms in the area. Cíbola was one of these kingdoms. The story of Cíbola was told by an enslaved African sailor. He had searched for the kingdom, but he died without finding it. The governor of New Spain then sent Francisco Vázquez de Coronado to find Cíbola. The kingdom was never found because it did not exist. Other Spanish explorers traveled to the Americas. Juan Ponce de León landed on the Florida peninsula in 1513. In 1540 Hernando de Soto became the first European to reach the Mississippi River.

### Society in New Spain

By the late 1500s, **society** in New Spain had four different groups. The most powerful group was the people who were born in Spain. They were called peninsulares. The second group was people who had a Spanish background, but were born in the Americas. The third group was made up of people with a mixed background. The lowest group in the society was the native people and Africans who did not have Spanish ancestors. Peninsulares owned **plantations**, or large farms with many workers. Some peninsulares were given **encomiendas**. Encomiendas

were grants that gave landowners control over native people living on the land. The peninsulares made a lot of money because of slave labor.

### More Changes for Native Peoples

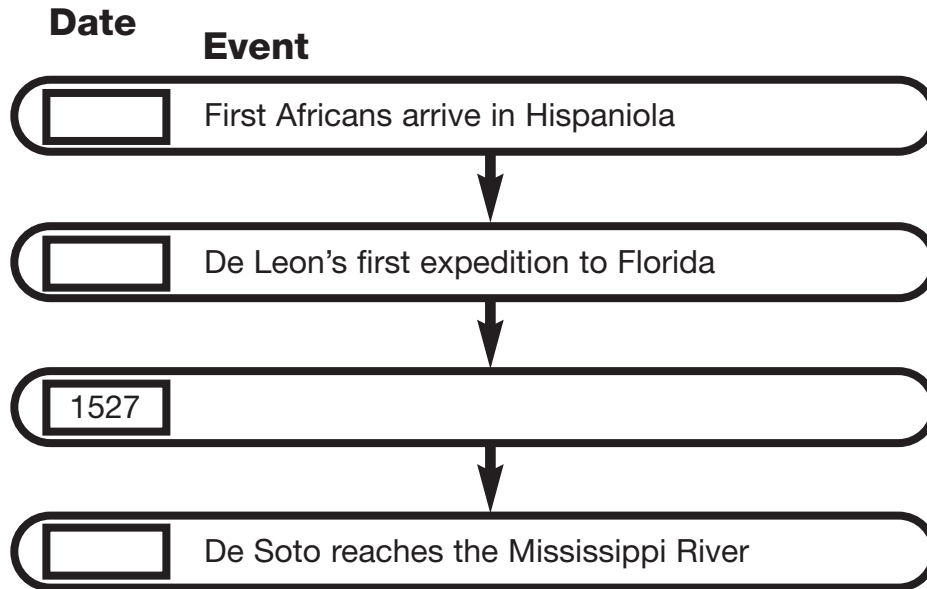
Native people on encomiendas worked as farm workers, miners, and servants. Many of them were treated poorly. Some **missions**, or religious settlements, were given encomiendas. **Missionaries** taught Christianity to native people. Priests built missions throughout New Spain. Some missionaries mistreated native people. Bartolomé de Las Casas was a priest. In 1527 he defended the rights of native people living on missions.

### Slavery in the Americas

Many native people died from disease and overwork. Then, the Spanish replaced them with enslaved Africans. In 1512 the first African slaves were brought to Hispaniola, a Caribbean island. At first, Las Casas supported African slavery. He later changed his opinion. African slave labor became an important part of the economy in New Spain.

## Lesson 3: Review

1.  **Sequence** Fill in either the missing dates or the missing events from this time line.



2. How did stories about Cíbola affect Spanish explorers?

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3. How did the structure of society in New Spain benefit the Spanish?

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4. How did conquest by the Spanish change life for the native peoples?

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5. **Critical Thinking: Point of View** Summarize the point of view of Las Casas about native people on the encomiendas.

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